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Гройсман выдвинул Коболеву невыполнимые условия

[Юрий Дощатов \(/author/548\)](#)



Владимир Гройсман. Фото: пресс-служба Кабмина



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Новые условия, которые выдвинул Кабинет министров для продления контракта с главой НАК "Нефтегаз Украины", в полной мере практически невыполнимы. В частности, увеличить добычу газа на 3 млрд кубометра за год нереально. Об этом заявил и сам глава НАК Андрей Коболев. Он считает необходимым пересмотреть этот показатель, в том числе, и в правительственной программе "2020". Но если набсовет компании не включит предложенные условия в контракт, то Кабмин может сделать это самостоятельно - такое право он получил [после внесения изменения в устав НАК \(/news/620920-kabmin-vnes-izmeneniya-v-ustav-neftegaza?fbclid=IwAR1IzxrilBLYY6MFTCP0oem1c-fjiB5L_imi28XIlj_ipGyyh-fQJ21ngbo\)](#). В этом случае нельзя исключать возможность отставки набсовета либо по собственному желанию, либо по желанию правительства.

Кабинет Министров на заседании 20 марта согласился на продление контракта с председателем правления НАК "Нефтегаз Украины" Андреем Коболевым еще на год. Соответствующее постановление №161 было опубликовано на сайте правительства вечером того же дня.

Действующий до 22 марта 2019 года трехлетний контракт с главой НАК был заключен 22 марта 2016 года. Решение о его продлении правительство приняло после того, как наблюдательный совет компании учел позицию премьера и согласился сократить зарплату Коболева в два раза - до 1 млн грн в месяц и пересмотрел порядок выплаты премий и бонусов за его работу.

Таким образом, глава НАК в 2019 году сможет получить лишь годовую премию в конце срока действия контракта, то есть, в конце марта 2020 года. Правда, сам Коболев уже пообещал средства, полученные за оплату работы в НАК в 2019 году, направлять на благотворительные цели (</news/610333-poluchiv-gigantskuyu-premiyu-kobolev-reshil-otkazatsya-ot-zarplaty>) и, по состоянию на начало марта, уже перевел 1,77 млн грн трем организациям, занимающимся помощью детям и семьям погибших в АТО.

Что хочет правительство

Всего для продления контракта правительство выдвинуло четыре обязательных условия.

В контракте должно быть зафиксировано, что компания под руководством Коболева должна будет увеличить объем добычи газа на 17,4% - до 18,2 млрд кубометров. Такой объем добычи предусмотрен в правительственной программе "2020" и зафиксирован в постановлении правительства №351 от 26 апреля 2017 года. В нем же, по итогу 2018 года, норма добычи газа установлена на уровне 16,5 млрд кубометров. Однако в реальности объем добычи составил лишь 15,5 млрд кубометров. То есть за год нужно нарастить добычу почти на 3 млрд кубометров.

Коболев, комментируя решение правительства, заявил, что установленного показателя к концу года достичь практически невозможно и планы добычи нужно пересмотреть. "Уже очевидно что ее (программу "2020", - ред.) нереально выполнить", сказал глава НАК. Причиной отсутствия роста добычи он назвал блокирование местными органами власти выдачи лицензий на разработку месторождений. Вместе с тем, Коболев отметил, что ситуация с выдачей лицензий в последнее время изменилась, но даже после этого планы выйти на добычу 18,5 млрд кубов газа к концу года нереальны.

Второе условие - подготовка финансового плана НАК на 2019 год в соответствии с госбюджетом. Это означает, что "Нефтегазу" придется отказаться от компенсации в размере 69,2 млрд грн за поставки газа по спецобязательствам и увеличить размер отчисления в бюджет прибыли с 50% до 90%. Как сообщали Українські Новини, поданный проект финплана компании в правительстве был раскритикован (</publication/2616-protivostoyanie-grojsmana-i-koboleva-v-kabmine-raskritikovali-finplan-naka-na-2019>), в частности, именно из-за этой компенсации. Руководство НАК ранее заявляло, что компенсационные средства будут направляться на работы по увеличению добычи газа.

Третье условие - до 1 января 2020 года "Нефтегаз" должен завершить процедуру анбандлинга, то есть, отделение функций транспортировки газа в соответствии с п 2 постановления №496 от 1 июля 2016 года. А это означает, что новым оператором ГТС должна стать компания "Магистральные газопроводы Украины", причем, весь процесс подготовки компании к работе должен быть проведен именно по плану, утвержденному этим документом. Но, на сегодняшний день, у руководства НАК другое видение проведения анбандлинга - через компанию "Оператор ГТС Украины", которая была создана еще в структуре "Укртрансгаза" еще в конце 2017 года.

И последним условием является создание юридических и технических предпосылок для транзита природного газа через украинскую ГТС в страны Европейского Союза с 2020 года - после окончания действия контракта на транзит газа с "Газпромом" от 2009 года.

Коболев уже заявил, что самостоятельно НАК этот вопрос транзита решить не сможет. "Для вопроса продления транзита будет нужна кооперация многих органов власти, а не только "Нефтегаза". В том числе и Верховной Рады", - заявил глава "Нефтегаза".

Все выполнить невозможно

Таким образом, ни об одном условии на сегодняшний день нельзя сказать однозначно, что оно может быть полностью выполнено. Но их невыполнение или ненадлежащее выполнение может стать причиной досрочного разрыва контракта с главой НАК решением Кабмина - так прописано в постановлении №161.

Все вышеперечисленные условия должны быть в обязательном порядке учтены в новом контракте с Коболевым и копия этого документа должна быть передана в Кабинет Министров. Пока информации о том, готов ли контракт в окончательной редакции нет. Также неизвестно, будут ли учтены в нем все условия правительства в полном объеме.

Если Набсовет примет условия правительства в полном объеме, то это будет выглядеть несколько странно, поскольку некоторые из них однозначно невыполнимы, к примеру об увеличении добычи газа на 3 млрд кубометров.

Если Набсовет откажется продлевать контракт с Коболевым на условиях правительства, то Кабмин может самостоятельно принять решение по этому вопросу. Такая возможность у него появилась в тот же день, когда были утверждены условия контракта. 20 марта была опубликована новая редакция устава НАК, которую правительство утвердило еще 6 марта в закрытом режиме.

Хотели? Получите.

С инициативой изменить устав выступил сам набсовет компании еще в прошлом году. "Изменения нашего устава были подготовлены набсоветом и поданы акционеру в апреле прошлого года", заявил недавно в интервью РБК-Украина (<https://www.rbc.ua/rus/news/andrey-kobolev-nadeyus-novogo-operatora-gts-1553028835.html>) Андрей Коболев. Эти предложения, по словам главы НАК, касались устранения несогласований устава и закона об акционерных обществах в части назначения и увольнения руководства компании.

Правительство учло эти предложения и внесло ряд изменений по своей инициативе. В итоге, роль набсовета НАК была существенно снижена ([/news/620920-kabmin-vnes-izmeneniya-v-ustav-neftegaza](https://www.rbc.ua/rus/news/620920-kabmin-vnes-izmeneniya-v-ustav-neftegaza)). Кабмин получил возможность в исключительных случаях принимать решения, которые обязательны к исполнению набсоветом "Нефтегаза" и самостоятельно принимать решения по руководству компании.

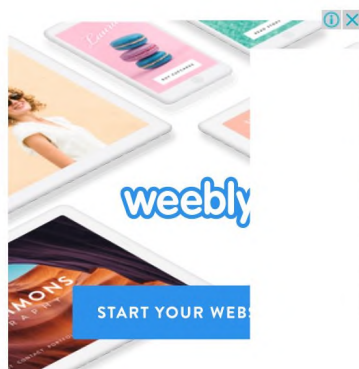
То есть, если набсовет в контракте с Коболевым не учтет все условия правительства, то Кабмин может принять решение самостоятельно и заключить контракт с ним в том виде, в котором считает нужным. Возможность такого варианта Украинским Новинам подтвердил источник в правительстве. "Если предложенный набсоветом контракт не понравится, то Кабмин може принять самостоятельное решение и без набсовета. Такое право у него после изменения устава компании есть", - отметил собеседник агентства.

Отставка набсовета вполне вероятна

Согласится ли сам Коболев работать в НАК дальше на условиях, некоторые из которых заведомо невыполнимы и, понимая, что в конце года он может быть уволен досрочно, пока неизвестно.

Но есть и другой вопрос. Зачем членам набсовета оставаться в составе этого органа и выполнять роль статистов? К тому же, Кабмин может сейчас принять и другие решения в отношении набсовета, к примеру, снизить по каким-то причинам зарплату членам этого органа, если они в своих решениях не будут прислушиваться к позиции акционера. Во всяком случае, нельзя исключать того, что некоторые члены набсовета, если не согласятся с предложениями Кабмина, могут заявить об увольнении.

Кстати, следует напомнить, что нынешний состав набсовета "Нефтегаза" фактически временный. Он был назначен в 2017 году в экстренном порядке ([/publication/2270-neftegaz-poluchyl-vremennyy-nabsovet-polnyy-sostav](https://www.rbc.ua/rus/publication/2270-neftegaz-poluchyl-vremennyy-nabsovet-polnyy-sostav)) без проведения конкурса, после того как прежний состав набсовета, кроме Владимира Демчишина, уволился, по неофициальной версии, из-за вмешательства правительства в работу НАК. Таким образом, уволить набсовет НАК и объявить конкурс по отбору новых его членов правительство может в любой момент.



Июнь 2019



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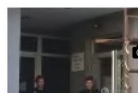


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[БОЛЬШЕ НОВОСТЕЙ \(/NEWS\)](#)

Naftogaz to present unbundling plan with concession early February

By Interfax-Ukraine. Published Jan. 25 at 9:43 am



Ukraine's oil and gas company Naftogaz Chief Executive Officer Andriy Kobolyev talks during a press conference after a meeting with the European Commission vice-president in charge of Energy Union and Russian representatives at the EU headquarters in Brussels on Jan. 21, 2019.

Photo by AFP

National joint-stock company Naftogaz Ukrainy early February 2019 plans to present its unbundling plan (unbundling of gas transportation operations of Naftogaz), foreseeing the concession option, for broad consultation, Naftogaz CEO Andriy Kobolyev has told Interfax-Ukraine in Davos.

"The option that we consider the most realistic for us of all now available in relation to parliament's work, politics and everything else is concession. The concession fits into the ISO (Independent System Operator) unbundling model that we need to maintain, including our requirements," he said on the sidelines of the Ukrainian Breakfast organized by the Victor Pinchuk Foundation.

"In this situation, we, as Naftogaz, as the only company that bears real financial responsibility for the unbundling, are going to follow this scenario," he said.

Kobolev said that theoretically there is still a privatization option that fits into the so-called OU (full ownership unbundling). "Here it will be necessary to transfer the [gas transmission] system into someone else's ownership, which, in my opinion, is unreal in fact," he said.

He said that Naftogaz had already discussed its option of unbundling with the European Commission.

According to him, there are some objective problems, since any plan of a real unbundling, and not its imitation, unbundling that meets the requirements of the Third Energy Package, will require changes in Ukrainian legislation, the mandatory resolution of the issue of how and on what basis the operator will receive the gas transmission system (GTS).

Kobolev said that during the presentation of his scenario, Naftogaz intends to explain what is necessary for its implementation from third parties: first of all, what is needed from the

parliament, and why this is correct.

"The only thing I agree with (Director of the Energy Community Secretariat Janez) Kopac in his approach to the issue [unbundling] is that the stakes are very high and unbundling needs to be done right now so that it does not have a negative impact on our ability of lobbying for the halt of Nord Stream 2 in Europe," Kobolyev said.



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NEWS

Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline to open by November

Russian gas will be piped direct to Germany from November despite the project's detractors, a project engineer has asserted. Critics have said Europe will be left vulnerable and climate goals will be undermined.



Russia's second natural gas pipeline across the Baltic seabed to Germany is just months away from completion, despite warnings from the US, Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania and the [EU commission over Europe's energy security](#).

Klaus Haussmann, engineer at Nord Stream 2's future landfall site at Lubmin on Germany's Baltic Sea coast [told German public radio station Deutschlandfunk](#) that the "raw" laying of the pipeline would be finished by the middle of 2019.

"Then comes the entire installation of the electrical equipment, security chains. And, then it's planned on the large scale that we get the first conduit filled with gas in November, from Russia," said Haussmann.

Read more: [Greenpeace, Trump against Nord Stream 2](#)



Nord Stream 2 — in fact two welded conduits, each with an inside diameter of 1.2 meters (4 feet) and largely following the route of Nord Stream 1 (operational since 2011) — will pipe gas - [sourced in northwest Siberia](#) - from its Leningrad region, tracking 1230 kilometers (764 miles) across the Baltic seabed, through Finnish, Swedish and Danish maritime waters, to northeastern Germany.

Along its trajectory, environmentalists including Germany's [Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union](#) (NABU) claim that seabed wildlife will be "irreparably damaged."

Just before Christmas, Nord Stream said 370 kilometers of pipeline had already been laid and special construction ships and their crews were "proceeding according to plan and on schedule" [into Swedish waters](#).

Rough Baltic weather

Haussmann told DLF his concern was more the impact of the Baltic's winter weather and waves on construction at sea and less so the international pros and cons.

"For two years or more, Nord Stream 2 has been pretty much under fire. But at the moment we have more worries with the weather outside," he said.

The avoidance of land and thereby transit fees has long angered Ukraine and Poland as well as Lithuania, which in 2014 at its Baltic [Port of Klaipeda](#) opened a terminal suitable for Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) from the USA and Qatar.

In early January, US ambassador to Germany Richard Grenell threatened sanctions against German firms involved, prompting Berlin to reply that "nothing had changed" and the project had its permits and proceeding.

"We're not that easy to impress and intimidate," said Economy Minister Peter Altmaier, adding he was open still to discussions with American LNG exporters.

Ukraine fears the Nord Stream Pipeline

The Nord Stream 2 venture, owned by Russia's Gazprom, based in Switzerland, and funded by five concerns, including Germany's BASF/Wintershall and Shell of the Netherlands and [fronted by former German chancellor Gerhard Schröder](#), claims the EU can make savings on carbon dioxide emissions by switching to gas instead of [coal-fired generation](#) of electricity.

Last May, Schröder [accused American exporters](#) of sourcing their LNG from fracking and trying to undermine Nord Stream 2, adding that Europe had a basic interest in obtaining "extra natural gas from Russia."

Read more: [Poland also favors LNG](#)

German Greens politician Jürgen Trittin — referring to renewable energy capture such as solar and wind — told DLF that while he was not an advocate of the pipelines, Gazprom had speculated on the "failure of an active Europe climate policy."

Germany needs more Russian gas because of energy transition away from nuclear and coal

Dependent on gas because of 'failed' climate policy

"If we were serious about climate protection, then the €10 billion (\$11.4 billion) Gazprom is now sinking into the Baltic Sea would possibly be money wasted — I wouldn't be sad about that!"

On the parallel issue, Trittin said he shared the view of Chancellor Angela Merkel's government that Europe also needed to invest in Ukraine's transit gas network — especially in the wake of Russia's 2014 seizure of Crimea.

Even a completed Nord Stream 2 would not suffice in terms of Europe's needs for gas imports, Trittin asserted, adding that he understood anger over Crimea.

Calls to cancel the already approved pipeline had not been fully thought through, Trittin added, because termination would result in "billions in damages paid to Gazprom."

DW RECOMMENDS

EU 'positive' on Russia-Ukraine gas talks

Talks have taken place in Berlin with the EU, Ukraine and Russia over the transit of gas from Russia to Europe. The forthcoming Nord Stream 2 project has stoked Ukrainian fears of economic isolation. (17.07.2018)

Nord Stream 2 pipeline row just got dirty

The green movement has very little in common with US President Donald Trump. But both are moving against the beleaguered Nord Stream 2 pipeline that is now being built to send Russian gas to Europe. (13.12.2018)

US Ambassador Richard Grenell threatens German firms over Russian pipeline

The US ambassador to Berlin, Richard Grenell, has sent threatening letters to German companies working on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, according to a German newspaper. Grenell reportedly warns of possible sanctions. (13.01.2019)

Putin's inauguration: Ex-German chancellor's front row seat sparks criticism

Gerhard Schröder's prominent place at Vladimir Putin's swearing in has raised eyebrows in Germany and abroad. Schröder, the chairman of Russia's Rosneft, has been calling for an end to sanctions against Moscow. (07.05.2018)

Poland signs 20-year liquefied natural gas deal with US

Consumers will be "protected" from Germany's switch from coal-fired power to renewables, says Economy Minister Peter Altmaier. Utility RWE says the full exit by 2038 to meet climate goals leaves it facing a "major feat." (28.01.2019)

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Dispute over Nord Stream 2

Gazprom, Yamal Peninsula

Gazprom's development project on Yamal Peninsula

Nord Stream 2 website

December 2018: 'pipelay' ships in Finnish and Swedish waters

Port of Klaipeda, Lithuania

Klaipeda's port includes a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminal

Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union, Germany (NABU), in German

Environmental protest over pipeline project

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung newspaper (in German)

Schröder: American exporters pursuing 'own interests'

Railroad for Gazprom's Bovanenkovo gas field development

Gazprom rail project on Yamal Peninsula, northwest Siberia

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Ukraine fears the Nord Stream Pipeline

Date 29.01.2019

Author Ian P. Johnson

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U.S. ambassador in Berlin warns Germans about Russian gas pipeline, triggering applause elsewhere

By Rick Noack

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American ire over German reliance on Russian natural gas imports shows no signs of letting up, and over the wee

issued a warning to German companies involved in a controversial new pipeline to Russia. Writing to several corporations over the weekend, he said, “we emphasize that companies involved in Russian energy exports are taking part in something that could prompt a significant risk of sanctions,” [according to the German weekly Bild am Sonntag](#) and [other German news outlets](#).

In a statement, embassy spokesman Joseph Giordano-Schultz said on Monday, “The U.S. Government has been clear that we agree with the European Parliament, the U.S. House and nearly 20 European countries in opposition to the Russian Nord Stream 2 project.” He added that “companies are free to work on [Nord Stream 2], and we are free to make clear that working on it could disqualify them from also working on U.S. projects.” the spokesman said.

He said the ambassador’s letter was not supposed to be a threat, but German lawmakers disagreed. The foreign policy spokesman of Chancellor Angela Merkel’s conservative Christian Democratic Union party and the Christian Social Union in the Bundestag called it “unacceptable.”

President Trump said in a speech at the U.N. General Assembly in September that Germany would become “totally dependent on Russian energy if it does not immediately change course” on its energy policy.

Within Europe, however, the Trump administration is not as isolated as its German critics would like it to be, as [WorldViews explained earlier](#):

What is Nord Stream 2 and why is it so controversial?

Russia is building its own pipeline, called Nord Stream 2, that could double the amount of natural gas it exports to Germany. For the European Union, natural gas is critical: It generates more than one-fourth of the European Union’s electricity needs, which are only growing.

A third of the European Union’s gas comes from Russia, and Moscow is hoping to boost its market share further. To ensure it does, the Russian natural gas company Gazprom is building two new pipelines into Europe. One of them, called Turkish Stream, will serve southern European markets via Turkey and Greece. But the far more controversial project is Nord Stream 2, which ends in northern Germany and is slated to supply major Western European nations, among others.

Western European countries hope more gas trade with Russia will reduce tensions and give them common economic interests with Moscow. But critics of Nord Stream 2 fear that the project will make Europe even more dependent on Russia and vulnerable to its political whims.

With Washington on the offensive, Eastern and Central European nations have also felt emboldened to ramp up their own criticism. Polish President Andrzej Duda called Nord Stream 2 “a [huge threat](#)” when he visited the White House in mid-September. In the Baltics, Estonian Foreign Minister Sven Mikser voiced similar skepticism in July, saying that the pipeline was “in contradiction with the principles of the E.U.’s energy policy” and warning that it would give Russia leverage “to intervene in European politics.”

Without mentioning the U.S. ambassador’s name, Ukraine’s national oil and gas company, Naftogaz, jumped to Grenell’s support on Monday, writing on Twitter: “[Nord Stream 2 is a real threat to the Baltic states](#).”

Nord Stream 2 is a real threat to the Baltic states. The recent developments in the Kerch Strait prove that the competition of Nord Stream 2 may lead to the occupation of the Baltic Sea by Russian military vessels on the pretext of protecting the pipeline.

— Naftogaz of Ukraine (@NaftogazUkraine) January 14, 2019

Why is Europe so divided on this issue?

Many of those countries still remember a dispute between Ukraine and Russia that began in March 2005. At the time, Moscow accused Kiev of diverting gas meant for E.U. nations and redirecting it to its own storage sites, thus avoiding paying for its own energy consumption.

The dispute escalated in 2009, when Russia stopped piping gas through Ukraine to force Kiev to end its alleged practices, which hit the nations that depend largely or completely on Russian gas hardest.

Russia and Germany concluded that new pipelines were needed to avoid the fraught route through Ukraine.

Things became even more complicated in June 2014, following a pro-European revolt in Ukraine that triggered Russia’s annexation of Crimea. As Russian-backed rebels fought Ukrainian soldiers, Moscow turned up the pressure by cutting off Ukraine’s gas supplies once again.

European pressure on Russia eventually ended the blockade, but Ukraine and other Eastern European countries fear that their Western European partners will be less inclined to help them once they receive gas through the new pipelines.

“It would increase Russia’s leverage: All of the sudden they would have another route and option to stranglehold Ukraine and to demand better transit conditions,” Nolan Theisen, head of the Globsec Policy Institute’s Energy Program, told The Washington Post last year.

In Germany itself, Nord Stream 2 has faced mounting resistance in reaction to Russian military operations in Georgia, Ukraine and Syria.

Still, there is — at least as of now — little chance the pressure will work. Widespread anti-Trump sentiment in Germany, the latest letter, a hard sell for Merkel and her allies. And then, there simply isn’t a real alternative.

“Germany has long been among the E.U. countries with the most friendly attitudes toward Russia — but they also deliveries,” said Andreas Heinrich, an Eastern Europe researcher at the University of Bremen.

What’s in it for the U.S.?

Britain, Norway and the Netherlands are Western and Northern Europe’s biggest gas producers, primarily relying on natural gas fields in the North Sea. But over the next few decades, Europe’s own resources — which accounted for more than a third of its supplies in 2016 — are expected to gradually disappear.

The supplies could be replaced either by Russian natural gas or by liquefied natural gas (LNG), which is natural gas that has been cooled to become liquid and loaded into shipping tanks. New fracking and drilling technology has already made the United States the world’s biggest natural-gas producer. It is now trying to become the top LNG exporter as well, with Europe its biggest potential market.

Only 4 percent of American LNG goes to Europe, compared with the 59 percent that is exported to Asian markets. That could change when the construction of six new European LNG port terminals is completed, most of them in former Soviet republics.

That is why key German business groups believe that American export interests, rather than security concerns, are behind Trump’s recent attacks on Nord Stream 2.

Dieter Kempf, president of Germany’s industrial association, [told the Süddeutsche Zeitung newspaper](#) in a recent interview that LNG would probably never constitute a real alternative to Russian gas. He argued that shipping LNG across the Atlantic Ocean is too expensive — a conclusion shared by a number of energy experts, including Theisen. Shipping LNG across the Atlantic can take weeks, and constructing the terminals where the gas would be unloaded is expensive.

“LNG and Russian gas will compete, but LNG won’t replace Russian exports,” Theisen predicted.

Still, Merkel agreed [to speed up the construction of an LNG terminal in Germany in November](#), trying to calm U.S. concerns about the country’s energy dependence on Russia. That effort, last weekend’s letter by the U.S. ambassador showed, clearly has not worked the way it was probably intended to.

Parts of this post were first published on Oct. 17, 2018. The piece was updated Jan 14, 2019.

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18:40, 15 January 2019

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The U.S. government and Congress have clear reservations about energy security and the geopolitical impact of the Nord Stream 2, the diplomat said.

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Average wage in Ukraine grows by 25% in 2018 – social minister

16:41, 15 January 2019

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The automatic recalculation of pensions from March 1 will be based on two basic indicators: inflation and the average salary for the past year.

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OPINION | COMMENTARY

Germans, Take a Stand Against Nord Stream 2

The pipeline project would aggravate dependence on Russia, harming European states' national security.

By Richard A. Grenell

Dec. 16, 2018 3:21 p.m. ET



A vessel lays concrete-coated pipe for the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline near Lubmin, Germany, Aug. 16. PHOTO: SEAN GALLUP/GETTY IMAGES

Berlin

Russia's recent aggression in the Sea of Azov reminds us of the need for vigilance against Vladimir Putin's malign activities. The U.S. and Germany have responded by strongly condemning Moscow's blockade of the Kerch Strait, a clear violation of international law. While we appreciate Germany's support for European solidarity, action should be taken to show Russia that its aggressions have consequences.

With this in mind, we ask Berlin to join the chorus of nations that view Gazprom's Nord Stream 2 pipeline project for what it is—an affront to Europe's energy and national-security goals.

Russia's actions highlight the danger of giving Moscow more sway over Germany's energy supply. In 2017 Germans imported more than 50% of their natural gas from Russia. If Nord Stream 2 is built, bypassing our Eastern European allies, it is bound to increase Germany's reliance on Russia even further. Russian influence would flow through the pipeline along with gas.

And what would flow the other way? Billions of euros that would support Moscow's destabilizing foreign policy, including its increasingly aggressive posture along NATO's eastern flank. We hope Germany pursues other supply options that would drive a competitive natural-gas market, rather than help Mr. Putin dominate the market.

If built, Nord Stream 2 and a second line of TurkStream would allow Russian gas to bypass Ukraine and undermine its security. That's clearly what Mr. Putin wants. Nord Stream 2 would open the door to increased aggression against Kiev, since Moscow would no longer have to worry about how its activities could affect its gas sales to Western Europe. The Ukrainian government would also lose billions in essential gas-transit income—a sum roughly equivalent to Kiev's entire defense budget. We welcome the commitment of Germany's chancellor to ensure that gas delivery through Ukraine will continue. Unfortunately, time and again Russia has demonstrated it cannot be trusted to uphold its promises or its contractual obligations.

Ukraine has no greater friend than the U.S. in the face of continued Russian aggression. Europe should send Moscow that clear message, too. The U.S. will continue its decades of strong support for the European goal of energy security through diversification. The latest Russian provocations show how urgent this effort is. Many German policy leaders already recognize this reality. Leading Bundestag members from the Christian

Democratic Union and Green Party have called for a restriction on Russian gas imports to Germany. That would be a step in the right direction.

Germany has made tireless efforts to resolve tensions between Russia and Ukraine through diplomacy. Now it is uniquely placed to use its political and economic clout to hold Russia accountable for its actions. By taking a tough stance through action on Nord Stream 2, Germans can show that they stand in solidarity with Ukraine and the rest of Europe, and that Mr. Putin won't get away with continued aggression.

Mr. Grenell is U.S. ambassador to Germany.

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Ukraine to seek Western partner to jointly manage gas transmission system

By Natalia Datskevych. Published Dec. 29, 2018. Updated Dec. 29 2018 at 3:51 pm



 Pedestrians walk past the headquarters of Naftogaz in Kyiv on Sept. 21, 2017.

Photo by Volodymyr Petrov

Ukraine will seek a partner in the United States or the European Union to jointly manage the country's natural gas transmission system, or GTS, according to Ukrainian Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman.

Such a partnership would help preserve a significant amount of gas transit through Ukrainian territory, Groysman said in a [Dec. 28 statement](#). That goal is growing increasingly important, as a consortium of firms construct the Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline between Russia and Germany, which could render Ukrainian gas transit to Europe largely obsolete.

"We are keen on finding a serious authoritative European or U.S. partner for the joint management of the GTS," Groysman said. "Our European partners are interested in receiving gas, and we are interested in ensuring transportation volumes, so we are both interested in joint management."

The partnership also appears to be one of several efforts to separate the GTS from state gas company Naftogaz.

In accordance with the EU's Third Energy Package, Ukraine must unbundle gas distribution company UkrTransGaz from Naftogaz, which is currently vertically integrated. The goal is to separate gas production processes from the transmission system.

Groysman also noted that, in January 2019, he expects to receive the final timetable for fully unbundling the GTS and handing it over to operator company Mahistralny Gazoprovody Ukrainy (in English, Ukrainian Main Gas Pipelines), by Jan. 1, 2020.

"As a result, we want to get a real strong player on the European gas market," Groysman said.

But who could those partners be? Experts disagree.

Company like Austria's OMV is already partner of Naftogaz. As a result, it could potentially operate the gas transportation system together with the Ukrainian state gas company, Cornelius Granig, president of the European Ukrainian Energy Council, told the Kyiv Post.

However, Oleksandr Kharchenko, the director of Ukraine's Energy Industry Research Center, believes U.S. partners will be more beneficial for the country.

"All European GTSs are much smaller than the Ukrainian gas transportation system," he said. "Meanwhile, American partners have a bigger management system and, accordingly, have more experience in managing, debugging and operating."

Uncertain benefits

Ukraine's efforts to find a Western partner and unbundle its GTS come at an ominous time for Ukrainian energy. The Russian-led Nord Stream 2 pipeline project, currently being constructed to cross the Baltic Sea and circumvent Ukraine, poses an enormous risk for gas transit volumes through Ukraine's GTS and the country's economy.

Eighty percent of Ukraine's gas transportation capacity is currently used by Moscow, according to state operator UkrTransGaz.

Currently, Ukraine derives up to 3 percent of its gross domestic product — roughly \$3.5 billion — from transit fees, Naftogaz CEO Andriy Kobolyev [told DW in October](#).

On Dec. 28, Kobolyev [called on the EU](#) to recognize that the benefits of Nord Stream 2 are uncertain and the pipeline project poses real threats. Russian gas company Gazprom, which is majority owned by the Russian government, violates its assurances that gas transit through Ukraine will continue after 2019, he added.

"Russia is not going to provide guarantees for the transit of gas through Ukraine's GTS after 2019," Kobolyev said.

However, others say that Nord Stream 2 has objective benefits, despite the harm it may do to Ukraine.

Guenther Oettinger, the EU budget commissioner, does not deny that Nord Stream 2 will strip Ukraine of important transit revenues. However, Berlin and Moscow have a common interest in the pipeline project, as it will double the capacity of the existing Nord Stream 1 pipeline next year, he says.

"I was never a great supporter of Nord Stream 2, but the truth is the pipeline has long been under construction and can no longer so easily be stopped," [Oettinger told German magazine Der Spiegel](#) on Dec. 28.

Politics

Germany Wobbles on Russian Gas Pipeline as Trump Pressure Starts to Bite

By [Patrick Donahue](#)

January 7, 2019, 12:00 PM EST

Updated on January 8, 2019, 5:10 AM EST

► [Merkel coalition lawmakers become more critical of Nord Stream](#)► [Mood shift may place pressure on government to shift stance](#)

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Support in German Chancellor Angela Merkel's coalition for a major new Russian gas pipeline is slipping as frustration with the Kremlin's brinkmanship grows and pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump starts to bite.

Nord Stream 2, an \$11 billion project that will double the natural gas supply under the Baltic Sea to Germany, faces growing skepticism among German officials who had previously defended it against criticism from Trump and some European Union allies, according to senior lawmakers. The shift could translate into pressure on Merkel's government to back down on the controversial pipeline and possibly delay its implementation.

Social Democratic lawmaker Nils Schmid, whose party has been a reliable supporter of the project, said too many decision-makers in Berlin had been slow to factor in Nord Stream's geopolitical significance. It will reduce the volume of gas pumped through Ukraine as Russia attempts to stifle its neighbor's economy by depriving it of lucrative transit fees.



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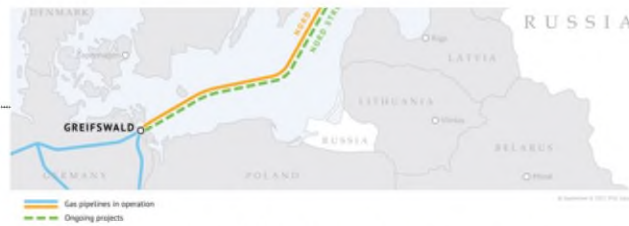
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The 1,220 kilometer (758-mile) Nord Stream 2 undersea link to Germany initiated by Russia in 2015. *Source: Gazprom*

“The debate in Germany has become more critical,” Schmid, the junior coalition party’s point man on foreign policy, said in an interview, adding that the project shouldn’t go forward until Russia and Ukraine reach a transit accord. “It would have been better to take this political dimension into account.”

Russia’s ‘Captive’

The 1,200-kilometer (750-mile) undersea pipeline -- being constructed by Russia’s Gazprom PJSC to bolster German supplies as Norwegian, Dutch and domestic sources dry up - has been pilloried by some of the country’s allies, who say it bolsters Europe’s reliance on Russian energy and bypasses key partners such as Ukraine. Trump has blasted the project as holding Germany “captive” to Russia.

The ground is shifting, with an ever more fraught relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin, particularly since the November seizure of two dozen Ukrainian sailors near the Sea of Azov. Merkel, who has sparred with Putin since the 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine, is demanding the release of the naval personnel.

The Azov incident in the Kerch Strait has soured prospects that Merkel’s diplomacy can scale back the conflict in eastern Ukraine, according Juergen Hardt, a lawmaker in Merkel’s Christian Democratic Union who speaks on foreign affairs.

Unfulfilled Hopes

“The events on the Kerch Strait at least showed me that these are unfulfilled hopes,” Hardt said in an interview. “Russia, in my view, isn’t moving a millimeter from its objectives.”

Hardt said Germany’s governing parties need to find consensus with the European Commission on energy diversification and reliance on Russian gas. He also

questioned the economic viability of Nord Stream, poking holes in the government's previous defense of the project.

Merkel shifted her position on Nord Stream last April, acknowledging the political dimensions of the pipeline and departing from her previous insistence that it was solely a business venture by private investors. The project must not weaken Ukraine by disrupting its gas transmission system, she said at the time.

Richard Grenell, the U.S. ambassador to Germany, welcomed the more skeptical view in Berlin, saying the pipeline project undermines the EU's energy and security objectives.

Russian Influence

"There is not only Russian gas coming through the pipeline, but also Russian influence," Grenell said in a statement to Bloomberg News. "Now is not the time to reward Moscow."

The U.S. administration has indicated that sanctions on the pipeline are imminent. Trump brought tensions over Nord Stream into full view at last July's NATO summit, raising the issue as he attacked Merkel over Germany's slack defense spending.

U.S. restrictions would potentially hit companies in Austria, France, Germany and the Netherlands. Royal Dutch Shell Plc, BASF SE's Wintershall unit, Uniper SE, OMV AG and Engie SA are Gazprom's partners in the project. The Russian gas giant reported a record 201 billion cubic meters of gas exports to Europe in 2018 and plans to maintain those volumes into 2020.

Simmering Tensions

Schmid maintained that the project, which would double the 55 billion cubic meters of natural gas flowing through the original Nord Stream pipeline that opened in 2011, isn't in danger. He also defended SPD support, particularly in Germany's east where, the pipeline makes landfall. But simmering geopolitical tensions are having an effect in Germany.

"Something has changed," Peter Beyer, the German government's coordinator for trans-Atlantic relations, said in an interview. He attributed the mood shift on Nord Stream as much to concern about leaving EU allies out in the cold as with Russia's recent maneuvers. Merkel's government may have to adjust to the demands of those taking a harder line on Nord Stream, he said.

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(Adds details on German gas needs in fifth paragraph.)

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